

# Thompson Historical Society Newsletter

We're on the web! Visit us at: [www.thompsonhistorical.org](http://www.thompsonhistorical.org)

September 2012

## Board of Directors

Meetings are held at the Thompson Library, starting at 7 pm:

- 11/7/12, Room 3
- 1/30/13, Room 2
- 3/6/13, Room 3
- 5/8/13, Room 3

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## Society News

### New Publications by Members!

**Paul Ryscavage** announced that his book on the history of Norman Ream is due to be released in November! Please see page 5 for details.

**Joe Lindley** has also shared with us two of his pieces on the Civil War, one based on the outstanding research of **Jim Cutler**, and now posted on the THS website (see page 7).

### Our Next Issue:

**It would be wonderful if you shared some of your treasured, winter/holiday photos or stories with us. If you can identify subjects/dates and the location of the photos, it would be appreciated!**

**Photos mailed to Joe will be returned, please be sure to include your mailing address.**

### Upcoming Presentations

**CT Boundaries** presentation by Ron Tillen. 7 PM Thompson Library. Date is either **Dec. 4 or 5, 2012**. Check website to confirm.

Ken Eithier, **Auburn Historical Society**, will host a presentation about old fashioned ice harvesting/block ice refrigeration. He has antique ice tools that will be on display as part of the presentation. Presented on **2/6/13, 7 pm**, Thompson Library & Community Center, Rt. 12, N. Grosvenordale, admission is free! Photos of some old Thompson ice houses will be shown. *Pond ice will be served!*

## Membership/Dues Information:

Members can find their paid status on the address sticker of this newsletter. (Membership runs on the THS fiscal year; July 1-June 30.)

### Thompson Historical Society

Attn: Membership

P.O. Box 47

Thompson, CT 06277

**Contributing Membership: \$25.00**

**Individual Membership: \$10.00**

**Family Membership: \$15.00**

Members are invited to purchase first-year memberships for new members for \$5.00.

## THS Wishes to Recognize

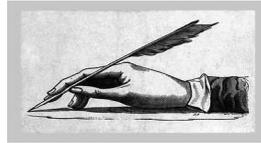
### With special thanks to:

- ◆ Sue & Rob Vincent for hosting our annual meeting and the 2nd graders' tour of their lovely farm.
- ◆ All who participated in the tour, especially the Thompson Hill Fire Co., Lynn Landry, our 'Quill Pen' hosts, Dave Babbitt, and teachers. Thanks also to Rob Paton for his coordination work with the school.
- ◆ Mark Snay, Lisa Berg, Kathy Welch, Cindy Obert and others who have been working to catalog our collection.
- ◆ Joe Lindley, Ron Tillen, my wife Val, and Sue Vincent for their research, presentations and assistance in answering questions.
- ◆ Our museum docents, gift shop volunteers, and Helen Flood for her scheduling efforts.
- ◆ Jon Brynga for addressing our insurance concerns.

And please forgive me for not addressing the many others who plow our snow, shovel our steps, sweep our porches, set up chairs and tables, patch concrete, take away beehives, donate wood, come to meetings, and offer suggestions. **We appreciate your continued support.** ~Joe

THS Contact info: [jjamartino@charter.net](mailto:jjamartino@charter.net)—860.923.3776

## President's Quill ~ Joe Iamartino



From the archives of the Killingly  
Historical Society,  
Windham County Transcript articles  
from the past.  
Supplied by our friend Marilyn Labbe

Friends,

Never had so much mail as I did for the piece in the last newsletter about the revival in the local wild-life scene. Stories poured in about those who care for the owls, the beekeepers, the 5 Mile River fishing - one of the cleanest rivers around - and other great topics. Thanks for the many kind letters and reports of even more animals that I did not mention.

The War of 1812 for many Americans is symbolized by the USS Constitution (Old Ironsides) who sailed again this day of my writing - August 19, 2012. Yet, for all of its long history, it had to be saved from the deep many times by people who understood what it symbolized for America. The legendary ship in the 1920s was rotting to pieces. Presented with an overwhelming list of needed repairs, Secretary of the Navy Curtis D. Wilbur formed a committee to direct the restoration and instructed them to find a way to raise the funds privately.

America's schoolchildren sent in ~15,000,000 pennies towards the restoration. Colorful posters of the Constitution were sold at 50 cents per copy. Here in Thompson, the children took this responsibility very seriously and sent in their

poster orders and hard-earned pennies. The small Thompson schoolhouses proudly displayed the Constitution poster in their schoolrooms.

Two hundred years separates us from the War of 1812. Few realize that during that time, Thompson's textile industry matured. American women were no longer able to get imported thread and had to use the locally spun material. While our textile factories grew stronger during the 1812-1815 period, our Naval ships were also evolving and, by the war's end, America had become both a manufacturing power and a sea power. Three very important years for America!

If you have some time, visit the website:  
[www.usconstitutionmuseum.org](http://www.usconstitutionmuseum.org) or take the short trip to Boston to visit the museum and the ship.

~ Joe Iamartino

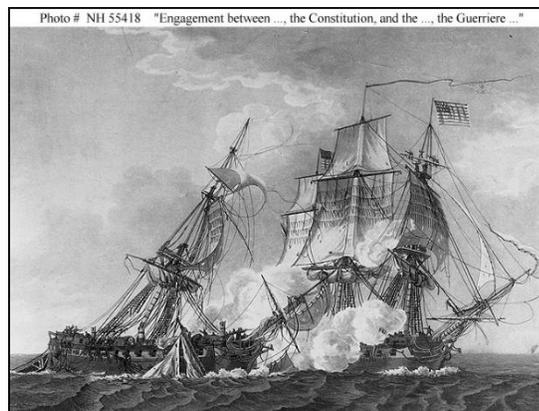


Photo # NH 55418 \*Engagement between ... the Constitution, and the ... the Guerriere ...\*

~ 7 December 1865 ~

Notice – Will be sold at public sale, on the premises, on Thursday, the 28th day of Dec. next at 1 o'clock, P. M., the Academy Building and Lot on which it stands, situated in the Centre Village of Thompson, late the property of William H. Mason, deceased. The building is of brick, 32 by 26 feet, two stories, with cellar under the same, and Piazza in front. The lot contains about 25 square rods of land. Talcott Crosby, William Grosvenor, Agents for Legatees. Thompson, Nov. 24th 1865.

**Photo #: NH 55418**  
**USS Constitution defeats HMS Guerriere, 19 August 1812**

Contemporary engraving by Jaxet after Baugean, published in Paris, France. It depicts the British frigate *Guerriere* losing her fore and main masts, near the conclusion of her battle with *USS Constitution*.

Courtesy of the New Haven Colony Historical Society.  
U.S. Naval History and Heritage Command Photograph

Retrieved from:  
<http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/events/war1812/atsea/con-gu-g.htm>

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*WPA Architectural Survey, Census of Old Buildings in Connecticut*

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On Thu, Aug 23, 2012, Ursula Hunt of CT.GOV

To: Newspaper Editor, Library Director, and Historical Society President

RE: Old Houses of Thompson

In 1934, a small group of people began visiting every town in Connecticut to survey its “old buildings.” A Work Projects Administration (WPA) project, the staff of the “Census of Old Buildings in Connecticut” completed forms with information about the buildings, and often also took photographs of the buildings.

The majority are houses, but some schools, churches, factories, and libraries are included. The survey forms and photographs were deposited in the State Archives, with additions coming in as late as 1942.

The Connecticut State Library has transcribed the forms, digitized the photographs, and is pleased to present them online as part of the CSL Digital Collections. Please see WPA Architectural Survey-Census of Old Buildings in Connecticut at <http://cslib.cdmhost.com/cdm/landingpage/collection/p4005coll7>.

To date, this information is online for Andover through Voluntown. This is a work in progress and the information for other towns is being added as time allows. We are sending this announcement to newspapers, libraries, and historical societies in the hope that they will spread the word about our project.

Most of the buildings have no name, and locations are rarely addresses, for example, “East side, facing west on Conn. 93, at southeast corner of Green.” Construction dates and the original owners are as written on the survey forms, even though more recent research may provide different information.

We encourage viewers to use the “**Tell Us More**” field in each building’s descriptive metadata (information about an item) to email us with more information about each building, its history, its address, current status, etc.

Any questions about this project can be directed to Carol Ganz, Reference Librarian, Connecticut State Library, [carol.ganz@ct.gov](mailto:carol.ganz@ct.gov).

Enjoy viewing our town’s old buildings!



**Editor’s note:** here is the direct link to Thompson’s old buildings:

<http://cslib.cdmhost.com/cdm/search/collection/p4005coll7/searchterm/Thompson!!!!/field/towns!towns!type!subject/mode/exact!none!none!any!/conn/and!and!and!and/order/title>

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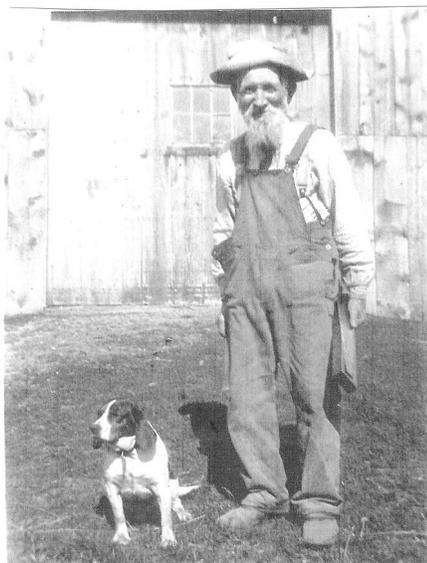
*Thompson and the Civil War*  
*Eighteenth Regiment Connecticut Volunteer Infantry*

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Yes the war did start in 1861, but by July of 1862, with no end in sight, President Abraham Lincoln issued a third call for more troops. Governor Buckingham of Connecticut, a strong supporter of President Lincoln and the war, responded and called for six regiments of three years' men. On July 28<sup>th</sup> he issued an order for the 18<sup>th</sup> Regiment to go into camp on the New London County Fairgrounds at Norwich. It was to be called Camp Aiken. This regiment was comprised mainly of volunteers from Windham and New London counties with 1182 recruits, 80 from Thompson. These were all volunteers as there was no draft at the time. The majority signed up for three years and some were for nine months.

In addition to Gov. Buckingham's call for volunteers, Dr. John McGregor returned to Thompson in August. A public reception was held for him on the Thompson Green. After more than one year held in captivity, his appearance and story left a deep impression on the men in the northern part of Windham County further stimulating them to volunteer.

Lieutenant Colonel Nichols and Dr. Lowell Holbrook of Thompson were in this regiment. Dr. Holbrook is known to have treated our Thompson men on the battlefield and here at home after the war.



The 18<sup>th</sup> Regiment was formed and left Norwich on August 22<sup>nd</sup>. One can only imagine what it

was like for a young Thompson farmer such as 28 year old Pvt. Nathan Chase (*pictured left and below*) leaving his wife and three young children. His wife, Ellen, was left at home with farm and household responsibilities. The regiment left by steamer to New York. Perhaps Nathan had never been on such a large boat on such a large body of water. On the wharves in New York several men found themselves without money and some possessions, thanks to the nimble hands of the local pickpockets.

The regiment was transported by train to Baltimore by way of Harrisburg, PA. They spent several months at Fort McHenry in Baltimore and Havre de Grace patrolling the railroad lines. For the remainder of the war they saw action in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.

*Submitted by: Mary Ellen Tomeo*



News-worthy

Norwich Bulletin, August 11, 1927:

PUTNAM: The happiest, most appreciative group at the Christy Circus on Saturday afternoon consisted of 86 youngsters from the Windham County Children's Home. Through the thoughtful generosity of J. R. Gladding of Thompson, they spent one of the happiest half days of their lives and the memory of it will linger and make many more of their days bright and joyous. Mr. Gladding does things of that kind thoroughly. He furnished transportation to the circus lot on Park Street.

*A big thank you to the **Last Green Valley** for a grant that helped us put images, artifacts, and old photos in the Society's and the THMS's collections online. Still in its infancy, we should see many more items online in the months ahead.*

*We also we give many thanks to **Charlie Panu** for taking care of the grounds of the Old Town Hall and to **Gerry Beaupre** and **Geoff Blodgett** for taking care of things around the Ellen Larned Museum.*

**The THS is very proud to announce the release of Paul Ryscavage's\* (TMHS '58) book, available in November 2012 titled, *Norman B. Ream: Forgotten Master of Markets.***

A brief synopsis of the book, available at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) reads: Norman Bruce Ream was born in southwestern Pennsylvania in 1844, the son of a farmer. He exhibited a commercial sense early on when he nursed a lame duck back to health and sold it for a profit. But the Civil War interrupted his mercantile ambitions. Wounded twice and promoted to lieutenant, he came home a hero.

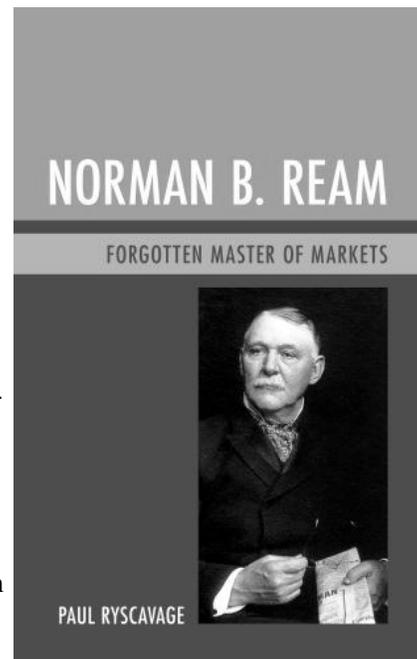
He went west after the war and became a merchant, first in Illinois and then Iowa. His businesses failed. Undeterred, he headed for Chicago and the Union Stock Yards. He worked as a commission merchant, but then traded his mud-caked boots for French kid boots and became a trader at the Board of Trade. His analytical mind was made for the grain and provision "pits." Money poured in especially after helping in one of P.D. Armour's pork corners; Ream had quickly become one of the city's best "plungers."

By the mid-1880s, he was married and the father of several children – and also a millionaire. He lived on Chicago's Prairie Avenue alongside the likes of George M. Pullman and Marshall Field. He began investing in real estate, urban transit companies, and railroad stock. Another millionaire neighbor, John W. Doane, interested him in consolidating and financing industrial enterprises. At the end of the 1890s, Mr. Ream had been involved in the creation of such companies as Glucose Sugar Refining, National Biscuit, and Federal Steel.

Finance capitalism, however, was based primarily on Wall Street. So, by the turn of the century, Mr. Ream was traveling to New York City, impressing financiers like J. Pierpont Morgan. He would help Morgan put together the United States Steel Corporation and International Harvester Company, and serve on the board of directors of many enterprises. He would also be at Morgan's side during the banking panic of 1907.

After the move, Ream and his family lived in a luxury apartment in New York City and a mansion in Connecticut. But life became turbulent in his remaining years. Public sentiment soured towards Wall Street and the wealthy (to include Norman B. Ream). This, along with social indiscretions from some of his children, kept the Ream name in the press well after his death in 1915. Then, gradually, his life was forgotten.

\*Paul is an economist best known for his work in the area of income and earnings inequality. He is the author of *Rethinking the Income Gap* and *Income Inequality in America: An Analysis of Trends*. Mr. Ryscavage's book is published by University Press Copublishing Division | Fairleigh Dickinson, Lanham, MD.



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*The "Company Store"*

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Pictured above is Hutchinson's General Store; which then became A.J. Dery's; and finally Kristek's General Store and Post Office. The store can be found on the earliest maps and prints of the Grosvenordale Mill area. The "company" store sat along Route 12, next to the "long bosses," or the supervisors tenement building. The store burned around 1950. During the time it was Kristek's it also housed a barber shop, candy shop and had an adjacent miniature golf course.

Historical information from: *Echoes of Old Thompson: A Pictorial History of Thompson, Connecticut.* (2003). Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Company Publishers.

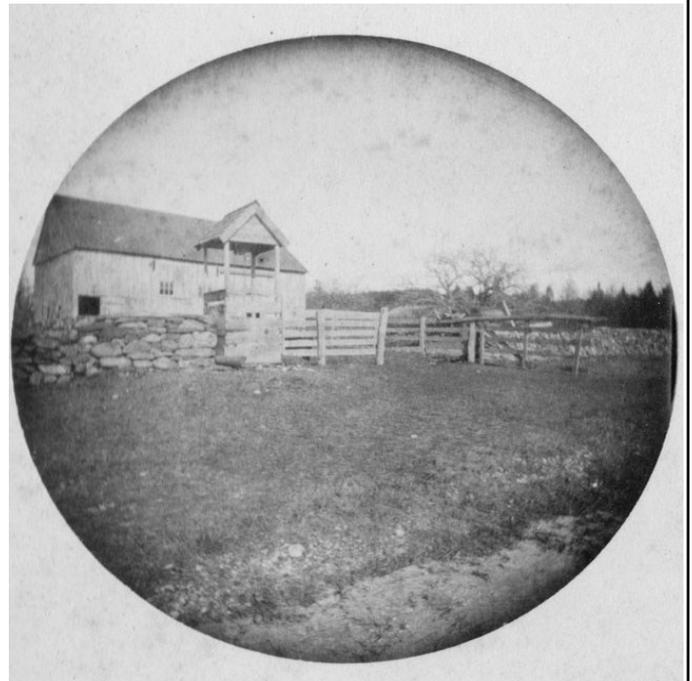
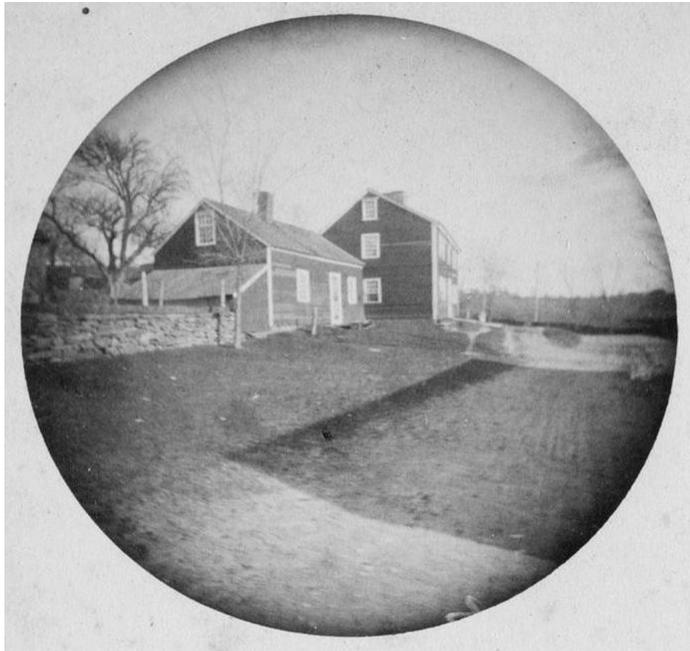
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*Another round of 'tidbits' from our friend Marilyn Labee at the Killingly Historical Society:*

***Windham County Transcript***  
***31 Oct. 1867 ~ Wilsonville***

- We learn from the Webster Times that an effort is being made to get a post office at Wilsonville. The name of Albert Converse accompanied the petition for postmaster.
- S. M. Wheelock & Co. have a woolen mill at Wilsonville, which turns out fancy cassimeres of various styles. It contains 4 sets of 48 inch cards and 22 looms, employs 70 hands, consumes 180,000 pounds of wool, and produces 140,000 yards of cloth per year. They are about introducing several new looms.

Our June 2012 newsletter (page 5) mentioned the Shapley House as featured in the Boston Herald. In August, Blair Cole let us know that Dale King brought several boxes of photos from his collection of Alice Ramsdell items to the Ballard Family Reunion. In one box, two old photos relating to the Nichols/Shapley property were found, and coincidentally were featured in the last

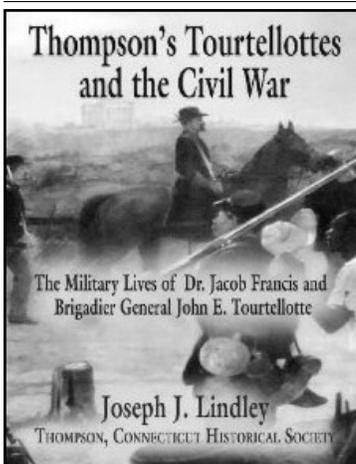


THS newsletter. The Nichols/Shapley house was named as one of two contenders for the oldest standing Thompson home by the noted historian Ellen Larned in the late 1800s. The rival was Brandy Hills' Cady House, now gone. The Nichols/Shapley house was moved to Gloucester, MA as mentioned in this NY Public Library document: Elsie Powell Ingraham

Family Papers, 1810-1962: <http://www.nypl.org/sites/default/files/archivalcollections/pdf/18134.pdf>.

*This move needs to be investigated further.*

### *Thompson and the Civil War - New Resources Available*



The book *Thompson's Tourtellottes and the Civil War* by Joe Lindley has been completed and is available at Amazon, Booklocker, Barnes and Noble, etc. **Proceeds, once publishing costs are paid, will go to the Thompson Historical Society!** This is an incredible story of two brothers from Thompson who had very different military careers during and following the Civil War.

Joe recently loaded Jim Cutler's work *Civil War: Connecticut Volunteers from Thompson* to our website, and added Regiment summaries found at a variety of sources. Unfortunately, Jim recently passed away in his hometown of Putnam. The Society offers our condolences to his family and friends.

The piece includes new pictures from Joe's personal collection. The source for this document is located on our website at:

<http://www.thompsonhistorical.org/pdf/Thompson%20Civil%20War%20Soldiers%20by%20James%20Cutler%20%20edited%20by%20Joseph%20Lindley.pdf>

Thank you Joe for all of your work on behalf of the Society, and particularly for

the generous donation of your book proceeds. We hope everyone enjoys these pieces of history!

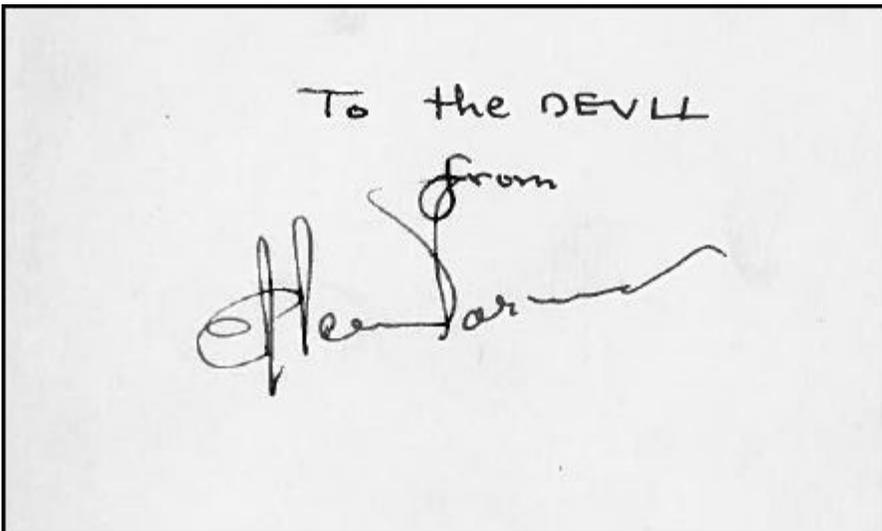
The Thompson Historical Society  
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Thompson, CT 06277  
[www.thompsonhistorical.org](http://www.thompsonhistorical.org)  
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**MYSTERY Q:** Jeffrey Stefanik recently wrote the THS with this VERY interesting note and picture of an Ellen Larned dedication. *What do you all think about it? Who could this inscription have been for?*

“Hi Joe, I was on my way home from vacation in the Berkshires when I found *Historical Gleanings in Windham County* (1899) in a used bookstore and snapped it up without even really looking at it. When I got home I noticed it was signed with this interesting dedication and I thought you'd appreciate seeing it.”



**Editor's Note:** A quick search for this title found an Internet Archive website where you can download the pdf of Ellen Larned's 1899 book at no charge!

Please visit:

[http://archive.org/details/historic\\_gleaning00larn](http://archive.org/details/historic_gleaning00larn) for some very interesting reading!

Publisher: Providence, RI: Preston and Rounds Company.